199—19.4(476) Customer relations.

19.4(1) *Customer information.* Each utility shall:

a. Maintain up-to-date maps, plans or records of its entire transmission and distribution systems, with such other information as may be necessary to enable the utility to advise prospective customers, and others entitled to the information, as to the facilities available for serving customers in its service area.

b. Assist customers or prospective customers in selecting the most economical rate schedule available for the proposed type of service.

c. Notify customers affected by a change in rates or schedule classification in the manner provided in the rules of practice and procedure before the commission (rule 199—26.4(476A)).

d. Post a notice in a conspicuous place in each office of the utility where applications for service are received, informing the public that copies of the rate schedules and rules relating to the service of the utility, as filed with the commission, are available for public inspection. If the utility provides access to its rate schedules and rules for service on its website, the notice shall include the website address.

e. Upon request, inform its customers as to the method of reading meters.

f. State, on the bill form, that tariff and rate schedule information is available upon request at the utility's local business office. If the utility provides access to its tariff and rate schedules on its website, the statement shall include the website address.

g. Upon request, transmit a statement of either the customer's actual consumption, or degree day adjusted consumption, at the company's option, of natural gas for each billing period during the prior 12 months.

h. Furnish such additional information as the customer may reasonably request.

19.4(2) *Customer contact employee qualifications.* Utilities will promptly and courteously resolve inquiries for information or complaints. Employees who receive customer telephone calls, emails, and office visits shall be qualified and trained in screening and resolving complaints to avoid a preliminary recitation of the entire complaint to employees without ability and authority to act. The employee shall provide identification to the customer that will enable the customer to reach that employee again if needed.

Each utility will notify their customers, by bill insert or notice on the bill form, of the address and telephone number where a utility representative qualified to assist in resolving the complaint can be reached. The bill insert or notice shall also include the following statement: "If (utility name) does not resolve your complaint, you may request assistance from the Iowa Utilities Commission by calling 515.725.7300 or toll-free 877.565.4450, or by writing to 1375 E. Court Ave., Des Moines, IA 50319-0069, or by email to customer@iuc.iowa.gov."

The bill insert or notice on the bill form shall be provided monthly. Any utility that does not use the standard statement described in this subrule will file its proposed statement in its tariff for approval.

19.4(3) *Customer deposits.*

a. Each utility may require from any customer or prospective customer a deposit intended to guarantee partial payment of bills for service. Each utility will allow a person other than the customer to pay the customer's deposit. In lieu of a cash deposit, the utility may accept the written guarantee of a surety or other responsible party as surety for an account. Upon termination of a guarantee contract, or whenever the utility deems the contract insufficient as to amount or surety, a cash deposit or a new or additional guarantee may be required for good cause upon reasonable written notice.

b. A new or additional deposit may be required from a customer when a deposit has been refunded or is found to be inadequate. Written notice shall be mailed advising the customer of any new or additional deposit requirement. The customer will have no less than 12 days from the date of mailing to comply. The new or additional deposit shall be payable at any of the utility's business offices or local authorized agents. An appropriate receipt shall be provided. The utility does not need to provide written notice of a deposit required as a prerequisite for commencing initial service.

c. No deposit shall be required as a condition for service other than determined by application of either credit rating or deposit calculation criteria, or both, of the filed tariff.

d. The total deposit for any residential or commercial customer for a place that has previously received service shall not be greater than the highest billing of service for one month for the place in the previous 12-month period. The deposit for any residential or commercial customer for a place that has not

previously received service or for an industrial customer shall be the customer's projected one-month usage for the place to be served as determined by the utility or as may be reasonably required by the utility in cases involving service for short periods or special occasions.

19.4(4) *Interest on customer deposits.* Interest will be paid by each utility to each customer required to make a deposit. Utilities will compute interest on customer deposits at 7.5 percent per annum, compounded annually. Interest is to be paid for the period beginning with the date of deposit to the date of refund or to the date that the deposit is applied to the customer's account, or to the date the customer's bill becomes permanently delinquent. The date of refund is that date on which the refund or the notice of deposit refund is forwarded to the customer's last-known address. The date a customer's bill becomes permanently delinquent, relative to an account treated as an uncollectible account, is the most recent date the account became delinquent.

19.4(5) *Customer deposit records.* Each utility shall keep records to show:

a. The name and address of each depositor.

b. The amount and date of the deposit.

c. Each transaction concerning the deposit.

19.4(6) *Customer's receipt for a deposit.* Utilities will issue a receipt of deposit to each customer from whom a deposit is received and provide means whereby a depositor may establish claim if the receipt is lost.

19.4(7) *Deposit refund.* A deposit shall be refunded after 12 consecutive months of prompt payment (which may be 11 timely payments and one automatic forgiveness of late payment) unless the utility is entitled to require a new or additional deposit. For refund purposes, accounts will be reviewed after 12 months of service following the making of the deposit and for each 12-month interval terminating on the anniversary of the deposit. However, deposits received from customers subject to the waiver provided by subrule 19.3(5), including surety deposits, may be retained by the utility until final billing. Upon termination of service, the deposit plus accumulated interest, less any unpaid utility bill of the customer, shall be reimbursed to the person who made the deposit.

19.4(8) *Unclaimed deposits.* Utilities will make reasonable efforts to return each unclaimed deposit and accrued interest after the termination of the services for which the deposit was made. The utility shall maintain a record of deposit information for at least two years or until such time as the deposit, together with accrued interest, escheats to the state pursuant to Iowa Code section 556.4, at which time the record and deposit, together with accrued interest less any lawful deductions, will be sent to the state treasurer pursuant to Iowa Code section 556.11.

19.4(9) *Customer bill forms.* Each customer shall be informed as promptly as possible following the reading of the customer's meter, on bill form or otherwise, of the following:

a. The reading of the meter at the beginning and at the end of the period for which the bill is provided.

b. The dates on which the meter was read at the beginning and end of the billing period.

c. The number and kind of units metered.

d. The applicable rate schedule with the identification of the applicable rate classification.

e. The account balance brought forward and the amount of each net charge for rate-schedule-priced utility service, sales tax, other taxes, late payment charge, and total amount currently due. In the case of prepayment meters, the amount of money collected shall be shown.

f. The last date for timely payment, which will not be less than 20 days after the bill is provided.

g. A distinct marking to identify an estimated bill, when applicable.

h. A distinct marking to identify a minimum bill.

i. Any conversions from meter reading units to billing units, or any calculations to determine billing units from recording or other devices, or any other factors, such as sliding scale or automatic adjustment and amount of sales tax adjustments used in determining the bill.

19.4(10) *Payment agreements.*

a. Availability of a first payment agreement. When a residential customer cannot pay in full a delinquent bill for utility service or has an outstanding debt to a utility for residential utility service and is not in default of a payment agreement with the utility, the utility shall offer the customer an opportunity

to enter into a reasonable payment agreement. The offer of a payment agreement is to be made prior to disconnection.

b. Reasonableness. Whether a payment agreement is reasonable will be determined by considering the current household income, ability to pay, payment history including prior defaults on similar agreements, the size of the bill, the amount of time and the reasons why the bill has been outstanding, and any special circumstances creating extreme hardships within the household. The utility may require the person to confirm financial difficulty with an acknowledgment from the department of health and human services or another agency.

c. Terms of payment agreements.

(1) First payment agreement. The utility shall offer the following conditions to customers who have received a disconnection notice or who have been previously disconnected and are not in default of a payment agreement:

1. For customers who received a disconnection notice or who have been disconnected less than 120 days and are not in default of a payment agreement, the utility shall offer an agreement with at least 12 even monthly payments. For customers who have been disconnected more than 120 days and are not in default of a payment agreement, the utility shall offer an agreement with at least six even monthly payments. Utilities will inform customers they may pay off the delinquency early without incurring any prepayment penalties.

2. The agreement shall also include provision for payment of the current account.

3. The utility may also require the customer to enter into a budget billing plan to pay the current bill.

4. When the customer makes the agreement in person, a signed copy of the agreement shall be provided to the customer.

5. The utility may offer the customer the option of making the agreement over the telephone or through electronic transmission.

6. When the customer makes the agreement over the telephone or through electronic transmission, the utility shall provide to the customer a written document reflecting the terms and conditions of the agreement within three days of the date the parties entered into the oral agreement or electronic agreement.

7. The document will be considered provided to the customer when addressed to the customer's last-known address and deposited in the U.S. mail with postage prepaid. If delivery is by other than U.S. mail, the document is considered provided to the customer when delivered to the last-known address of the customer or sent via electronic delivery with customer consent. Such consent shall be deemed given when the customer consents to or requests electronic billing.

8. The document shall state that unless the customer notifies the utility otherwise within ten days from the date the document is provided, it will be deemed that the customer accepts the terms as reflected in the written document. The document stating the terms and agreements shall include the address and a toll-free or collect telephone number where a qualified representative can be reached.

9. Once the first payment required by the agreement is made by the customer or on behalf of the customer, the oral or electronic agreement is deemed accepted by the customer.

10. Each customer entering into a first payment agreement shall be granted at least one late payment that is four days or less beyond the due date for payment, and the first payment agreement shall remain in effect.

11. The initial payment is due on the due date for the next regular bill.

12. A customer shall not be charged interest, or a late payment charge, on a payment agreement where the customer is making payments consistent with the terms of the payment agreement.

(2) Second payment agreement. The utility shall offer a second payment agreement to a customer who is in default of a first payment agreement if the customer has made at least two consecutive full payments under the first payment agreement.

1. The second payment agreement shall be for a term at least as long as the term of the first payment agreement.

2. The customer shall pay for current service in addition to the monthly payments under the second payment agreement and may be required to make the first payment up-front as a condition of entering into the second payment agreement.

3. The utility may also require the customer to enter into a budget billing plan to pay the current bill.

(3) Additional payment agreements. The utility may offer additional payment agreements to the customer.

d. Refusal by utility.

(1) A customer may offer the utility a proposed payment agreement. If the utility and the customer do not reach an agreement, the utility may refuse the offer orally, but the utility must provide a written refusal of the customer's final offer, stating the reason for the refusal, within three days of the oral notification. The written refusal shall be considered provided to the customer when addressed to the customer's last-known address and deposited in the U.S. mail with postage prepaid. If delivery is by other than U.S. mail, the written refusal shall be considered provided to the customer when handed to the customer, delivered to the last-known address of the customer, or sent via electronic delivery with customer consent. Such consent shall be deemed given when the customer consents to or requests electronic billing.

(2) A customer may ask the commission for assistance in working out a reasonable payment agreement within ten days after the written refusal is provided. During the review of this request, the utility shall not disconnect the service.

19.4(11) *Bill payment terms.* The bill is considered provided to the customer when deposited in the U.S. mail with postage prepaid. If delivery is by other than U.S. mail, the bill is considered provided when delivered to the last-known address of the customer or sent via electronic delivery with customer consent. Such consent shall be deemed given when the customer consents to or requests electronic billing. An account shall not be delinquent until 20 days have passed since the bill was provided to the customer. For customers on more frequent billing intervals, an account shall not be delinquent until five days have passed since the bill was provided to the customer. A late payment charge will not be assessed if payment is received within 20 days of the date the bill is provided.

a. The date of delinquency for all residential customers or other customers whose consumption is less than 250 ccf per month shall be changeable for cause, such as but not limited to 15 days from the approximate date each month upon which income is received by the person responsible for payment. Utilities are not required to delay the date of delinquency more than 30 days beyond the date of preparation of the previous bill.

b. In any case where net and gross amounts are billed to customers, the difference between net and gross is a late payment charge and is valid only when part of a delinquent bill payment. A utility's late payment charge shall not exceed 1.5 percent per month of the past due amount. No collection fee may be levied in addition to this late payment charge. This rule does not prohibit cost-justified charges for disconnection and reconnection of service.

c. If the customer makes partial payment in a timely manner, and does not designate the service or product for which payment is made, the payment shall be credited pro rata between the bill for utility services and related taxes.

d. Each account shall be granted not less than one complete forgiveness of a late payment charge each calendar year. The utility's rules shall be definitive that on one monthly bill in each period of eligibility, the utility will accept the net amount of such bill as full payment for such month after expiration of the net payment period. The rules shall state how the customer is notified that the eligibility has been used. Complete forgiveness means no effect upon the credit rating of the customer and no collection of late payment charge.

e. Budget billing plan. Utilities shall offer a budget billing plan to all residential customers or other customers whose consumption is less than 250 ccf per month. A budget billing plan should be designed to limit the volatility of a customer's bill and maintain reasonable account balances and will include at least the following:

(1) Be offered to each eligible customer when the customer initially requests service. The plan may be estimated if there is insufficient usage history to create a budget billing plan based on actual use.

(2) Allow for entry into the budget billing plan anytime during the calendar year.

(3) Provide that a customer may request termination of the plan at any time. If the customer's account is in arrears at the time of termination, the balance shall be due and payable at the time of termination. If there is a credit balance, the customer may obtain a refund or apply the credit to future charges. A utility

is not required to offer a new budget billing plan to a customer for six months after the customer has terminated from a budget billing plan.

(4) Use a computation method that produces a reasonable monthly budget billing amount, which may take into account forward-looking factors such as fuel price and weather forecasts, and that complies with requirements in this subrule. The computation method used by the utility shall be described in the utility's tariff. The utility shall give notice to customers when it changes the type of computation method in the budget billing plan.

1. The amount to be paid at each billing interval by a customer on a budget billing plan shall be computed at the time of entry into the plan and be recomputed at least annually. The budget billing amount may be recomputed monthly, quarterly, when requested by the customer, or whenever price, consumption, or a combination of factors results in a new estimate differing by 10 percent or more from that in use.

2. When the budget billing amount is recomputed, the utility shall divide the budget billing plan account balance by 12, and add the resulting amount to the estimated monthly budget billing amount. Except when a utility has a budget billing plan that recomputes the budget billing amount monthly, the customer may apply any credit to payments of subsequent months' budget billing amounts due or obtain a refund of any credit in excess of $25.

3. Except when a utility has a budget billing plan that recomputes the budget billing amount monthly, the customer shall be notified of the recomputed payment amount not less than one full billing cycle prior to the date of delinquency for the recomputed payment. The notice may accompany the bill prior to the bill that is affected by the recomputed payment amount.

4. Irrespective of the account balance, a delinquency in payment is subject to the same collection and disconnection procedures as other accounts, with the late payment charge applied to the budget billing amount. If the account balance is a credit, the budget billing plan may be terminated by the utility after 30 days of delinquency.

19.4(12) *Customer records.* The utility shall retain customer billing records for the length of time necessary to permit the utility to comply with subrule 19.4(13) but not less than five years. Customer billing records shall show, where applicable:

a. Therm consumption.

b. Meter reading.

c. Total amount of bill.

19.4(13) *Adjustment of bills.* Bills that are incorrect due to billing errors or faulty metering installation are to be adjusted as follows:

a. Fast metering. Whenever a metering installation is tested and found to have overregistered more than 2 percent, the utility shall recalculate the bills for service.

(1) The bills for service shall be recalculated from the time at which the error first developed or occurred if that time can be definitely determined.

(2) If the time at which the error first developed or occurred cannot be definitely determined, it shall be assumed that the overregistration has existed for the shortest time period calculated as one-half the time since the meter was installed or one-half the time elapsed since the last meter test unless otherwise ordered by the commission.

(3) If the recalculated bills indicate that $5 or more is due an existing customer or $10 or more is due a person no longer a customer of the utility, the tariff shall provide for refunding of the full amount of the calculated difference between the amount paid and the recalculated amount. Refunds shall be made to the two most recent customers who received service through the metering installation during the time the error existed. In the case of a previous customer who is no longer a customer of the utility, a notice of the amount subject to refund shall be mailed to such previous customer at the last-known address, and the utility shall, upon demand made within three months thereafter, refund the same.

Refunds shall be completed within six months following the date of the metering installation test.

b. Slow metering. Whenever a meter is found to be more than 2 percent slow, the tariff may provide for back billing the customer for the amount the test indicates has been undercharged for the period of inaccuracy.

When the average error cannot be determined by test because of failure of part or all of the metering equipment, the tariff may provide for use of the registration of check metering installation, if any, or for estimating the quantity consumed based on available data. The utility will advise the customer of the failure and of the basis for the estimate of quantity billed.

(1) The utility may not back bill due to underregistration unless a minimum back bill amount is specified in its tariff. The minimum amount specified for back billing shall not be less than $5 for an existing customer or $10 for a former customer. All recalculations resulting in an amount due equal to or greater than the tariff specified minimum shall result in issuance of a back bill.

(2) The period for back billing shall not exceed the last six months the meter was in service unless otherwise ordered by the commission.

(3) Back billings shall be provided no later than six months following the date of the metering installation test.

c. Billing adjustments due to fast or slow meters shall be calculated on the basis that the meter should be 100 percent accurate. For the purpose of billing adjustment, the meter error shall be one-half of the algebraic sum of the error at full-rated flow plus the error at check flow.

d. Overcharges. When a customer has been overcharged as a result of incorrect reading of the meter, incorrect application of the rate schedule, incorrect connection of the meter, or other similar reasons, the amount of the overcharge shall be adjusted, refunded, or credited to the customer. The utility shall not be required to adjust, refund, or credit the customer's bill for a period of more than five years unless a different time period is ordered by the commission.

e. Undercharges. When a customer has been undercharged as a result of incorrect reading of the meter, incorrect application of the rate schedule, incorrect connection of the meter, or other similar reasons, the amount of the undercharge may be billed to the customer. The period for which the utility may adjust for the undercharge shall not exceed five years unless otherwise ordered by the commission. The maximum back bill will not exceed the dollar amount equivalent to the tariffed rate for like charges (e.g., usage-based, fixed, or service charges) in the 12 months preceding discovery of the error unless otherwise ordered by the commission.

f. Credits and explanations. Credits due to a customer because of meter inaccuracies, errors in billing, or misapplication of rates shall be separately identified.

19.4(14) *Refusal or disconnection of service.* A customer, as defined in subrule 19.1(2), may be refused or disconnected from service in accordance with tariffs that are consistent with these rules.

a. The utility shall give written notice of pending disconnection except as specified in paragraph 19.4(14)*"b."* The notice shall set forth the reason for the notice and final date by which the account is to be settled or specific action taken. The notice is considered provided to the customer when addressed to the customer's last-known address and deposited in the U.S. mail with postage prepaid. If delivery is by other than U.S. mail, the notice is considered provided when delivered to the last-known address of the customer or sent via electronic delivery with customer consent. Such consent shall be deemed given when the customer consents to or requests electronic billing. The date for disconnection of service shall be not less than 12 days after the notice is provided. The date for disconnection of service for customers on shorter billing intervals under subrule 19.3(5) shall not be less than 24 hours after the notice is posted at the service premises.

One written notice, including all reasons for the notice, shall be given where more than one cause exists for disconnection of service. In determining the final date by which the account is to be settled or other specific action taken, the days of notice for the causes shall be concurrent.

b. Service may be disconnected without notice:

(1) In the event of a condition determined by the utility to be hazardous.

(2) In the event of customer use of equipment in a manner that adversely affects the utility's equipment or the utility's service to others.

(3) In the event of tampering with the equipment furnished and owned by the utility. For the purposes of this subrule, a broken or absent meter seal alone shall not constitute tampering.

(4) In the event of unauthorized use.

c. Service may be disconnected or refused after proper notice:

(1) For violation of or noncompliance with the utility's rules on file with the commission.

(2) For failure of the customer to furnish the service equipment, permits, certificates, or rights-of-way that are specified to be furnished, in the utility's rules filed with the commission, as conditions of obtaining service, or for the withdrawal of that same equipment, or for the termination of those same permissions or rights, or for the failure of the customer to fulfill the contractual obligations imposed as conditions of obtaining service by any contract filed with and subject to the regulatory authority of the commission.

(3) For failure of the customer to permit the utility reasonable access to the utility's equipment.

d. Service may be refused or disconnected after proper notice for nonpayment of a bill or deposit, except as restricted by subrules 19.4(15) and 19.4(16), provided that the utility has complied with the following provisions when applicable:

(1) Given the customer a reasonable opportunity to dispute the reason for the disconnection or refusal;

(2) Given the customer, and any other person or agency designated by the customer, written notice that the customer has at least 12 days in which to make settlement of the account to avoid disconnection and a written summary of the rights and responsibilities available. Customers billed more frequently than monthly pursuant to subrule 19.3(5) shall be given posted written notice that they have 24 hours to make settlement of the account to avoid disconnection and a written summary of the rights and responsibilities. All written notices shall include a toll-free or collect telephone number where a utility representative qualified to provide additional information about the disconnection can be reached. Each utility representative must provide the representative's name and have immediate access to current, detailed information concerning the customer's account and previous contacts with the utility.

(3) The summary of the rights and responsibilities must be approved by the commission. Any utility that does not use the standard form set forth below for customers billed monthly shall submit to the commission electronically its proposed form for approval. A utility billing a combination customer for both gas and electric service may modify the standard form to replace each use of the word "gas" with the words "gas and electric" in all instances.

CUSTOMER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES TO AVOID SHUTOFF OF GAS SERVICE FOR NONPAYMENT

1. What can I do if I receive a notice from the utility that says my gas service will be shut off because I have a past due bill?

a. Pay the bill in full;

b. Enter into a reasonable payment plan with the utility (see #2 below);

c. Apply for and become eligible for low-income energy assistance (see #3 below);

d. Give the utility a written statement from a doctor or public health official stating that shutting off your gas service would pose an especial health danger for a person living at the residence (see #4 below); or

e. Tell the utility if you think part of the amount shown on the bill is wrong. However, you must still pay the part of the bill you agree you owe the utility (see #5 below).

2. How do I go about making a reasonable payment plan? (Residential customers only)

a. Contact the utility as soon as you know you cannot pay the amount you owe. If you cannot pay all the money you owe at one time, the utility may offer you a payment plan that spreads payments evenly over at least 12 months. The plan may be longer depending on your financial situation.

b. If you have not made the payments you promised in a previous payment plan with the utility and still owe money, you may qualify for a second payment agreement under certain conditions.

c. If you do not make the payments you promise, the utility may shut off your utility service on one day's notice unless all the money you owe the utility is paid or you enter into another payment agreement.

3. How do I apply for low income energy assistance? (Residential customers only)

a. Applications are taken at your local community action agency. If you are unsure where to apply, call 211 or 800.244.7431, or visit hhs.iowa.gov/programs/programs-and-services/liheap. To prevent disconnection, contact the utility prior to disconnection of your service.

b. To avoid disconnection, you must apply for energy assistance or weatherization before your service is shut off. Notify your utility that you may be eligible and have applied for energy assistance. Once your service has been disconnected, it will not be reconnected based on approval for energy assistance.

c. Being certified eligible for energy assistance will prevent your service from being disconnected from November 1 through April 1. Between November 1 and April 1, the utility will delay disconnection of your service for 30 days once you notify the utility that you are applying for energy assistance or weatherization assistance, to allow you time to obtain assistance. Only one 30-day delay is required during the moratorium period.

4. What if someone living at the residence has a serious health condition? (Residential customers only)

Contact the utility if you believe this is the case. Contact your doctor or a public health official and ask the doctor or health official to contact the utility and state that shutting off your utility service would pose an especial health danger for a person living at your residence. The doctor or public health official must provide a written statement to the utility office within five days of when your doctor or public health official notifies the utility of the health condition; otherwise, your utility service may be shut off. If the utility receives this written statement, your service will not be shut off for 30 days. This 30-day delay is to allow you time to arrange payment of your utility bill or find other living arrangements. After 30 days, your service may be shut off if full payment or a payment agreement has not been made.

5. What should I do if I believe my bill is not correct?

You may dispute your utility bill. You must tell the utility that you dispute the bill. You must pay the part of the bill you think is correct. If you do this, the utility will not shut off your service for up to 45 days from the date the bill was mailed while you and the utility work out the dispute over the part of the bill you think is incorrect. You may ask the Iowa Utilities Commission for assistance in resolving the dispute. (See #9 below.)

6. When can the utility shut off my utility service because I have not paid my bill?

a. Your utility can shut off service between the hours of 6 a.m. and 2 p.m., Monday through Friday.

b. The utility will not shut off your service on nights, weekends, or holidays for nonpayment of a bill.

c. The utility will not shut off your service if you enter into a reasonable payment plan to pay the overdue amount (see #2 above).

d. The utility will not shut off your service if the temperature is forecasted to be 20 degrees Fahrenheit or colder during the following 24-hour period, including the day your service is scheduled to be shut off.

e. If you have qualified for low-income energy assistance, the utility cannot shut off your service from November 1 through April 1. However, you will still owe the utility for the service used during this time.

f. The utility will not shut off your service if you have notified the utility that you dispute a portion of your bill and you pay the part of the bill that you agree is correct.

g. If one of the heads of household is a service member deployed for military service, utility service cannot be shut off during the deployment or within 90 days after the end of deployment. In order for this exception to disconnection to apply, the utility must be informed of the deployment prior to disconnection. However, you will still owe the utility for service used during this time.

7. How will I be told the utility is going to shut off my gas service?

a. You must be given a written notice at least 12 days before the utility service can be shut off for nonpayment. This notice will include the reason for shutting off your service.

b. If you have not made payments required by an agreed-upon payment plan, your service may be disconnected with only one day's notice.

c. The utility must also try to reach you by telephone or in person before it shuts off your service. From November 1 through April 1, if the utility cannot reach you by telephone or in person, the utility will put a written notice on the door or another conspicuous place of your residence to tell you that your utility service will be shut off.

8. If service is shut off, when will it be turned back on?

a. The utility will turn your service back on if you pay the whole amount you owe or agree to a reasonable payment plan. The service shall be restored for 30 days if you provide the utility with medical verification from a doctor or public health official of an especial danger to health within 14 days of a shut off for nonpayment.

b. If you make your payment during the utility's regular business hours, or by 7 p.m. for utilities permitting such payment or other arrangements after regular business hours, the utility must make a

reasonable effort to turn your service back on that day. If service cannot reasonably be turned on that same day, the utility must do it by 11 a.m. the next day.

c. The utility may charge you a fee to turn your service back on. The fee may be higher in the evening or on weekends, so you may ask that your service be turned on during normal utility business hours.

9. Is there any other help available besides my utility?

If the utility has not been able to help you with your problem, you may contact the Iowa Utilities Commission toll-free at 877.565.4450. You may also write the Iowa Utilities Commission at 1375 E. Court Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0069, or by email at customer@iuc.iowa.gov. Low-income customers may also be eligible for free legal assistance from Iowa Legal Aid, and may contact Legal Aid at 800.532.1275.

(4) When disconnecting service to a residence, the utility has made a diligent attempt to contact, by telephone or in person, the customer to inform the customer of the pending disconnection and the customer's rights and responsibilities. During the period from November 1 through April 1, if the attempt at customer contact fails, the premises shall be posted at least one day prior to disconnection with a notice informing the customer of the pending disconnection and rights and responsibilities available to avoid disconnection.

If an attempt at personal or telephone contact of a customer occupying a rental unit has been unsuccessful, the utility shall make a diligent attempt to contact the landlord of the rental unit, if known, to determine if the customer is still in occupancy and, if so, the customer's present location. The landlord shall also be informed of the date when service may be disconnected, which will be provided at least 48 hours prior to disconnection of service to a tenant.

If the disconnection will affect occupants of residential units leased from the customer, the premises of any building known by the utility to contain residential units affected by disconnection must be posted, at least two days prior to disconnection, with a notice informing any occupants of the date when service will be disconnected and the reasons for the disconnection.

(5) Disputed bill. If the customer has received notice of disconnection and has a dispute concerning a bill for natural gas service, the utility may require the customer to pay a sum of money equal to the amount of the undisputed portion of the bill pending settlement and thereby avoid disconnection of service. A utility shall delay disconnection for nonpayment of the disputed bill for up to 45 days after the providing of the bill if the customer pays the undisputed amount. The 45 days may be extended if requested of the utility by the commission in the event the customer files a written complaint with the commission in compliance with 199—Chapter 6.

(6) Disconnection and reconnection. Disconnection of a residential customer may take place only between the hours of 6 a.m. and 2 p.m. on a weekday and not on weekends or holidays. If a disconnected customer makes payment or other arrangements during the utility's normal business hours, or by 7 p.m. for utilities permitting such payment or other arrangements after normal business hours, all reasonable efforts shall be made to reconnect the customer that day. If a disconnected customer makes payment or other arrangements after 7 p.m., all reasonable efforts shall be made to reconnect the customer not later than 11 a.m. the next day.

(7) Severe cold weather. A disconnection may not take place where gas is used as the only source of space heating or to control or operate the only space heating equipment at a residence when the actual temperature or the 24-hour forecast of the National Weather Service for the residence's area is predicted to be 20 degrees Fahrenheit or colder. If the utility has properly posted a disconnect notice but is precluded from disconnecting service because of severe cold weather, the utility may immediately proceed with appropriate disconnection procedures, without further notice, when the temperature in the residence's area rises above 20 degrees Fahrenheit and is forecasted to remain above 20 degrees Fahrenheit for at least 24 hours, unless the customer has paid in full the past due amount or is otherwise entitled to postponement of disconnection.

(8) Medical stay. Disconnection of a residential customer shall be postponed if the disconnection of service would present an especial danger to the health of any permanent resident of the premises. An especial danger to health is indicated if a person appears to be seriously impaired and may, because of mental or physical problems, be unable to manage the person's own resources, to carry out activities

of daily living or to be protected from neglect or hazardous situations without assistance from others. Indicators of an especial danger to health include but are not limited to age, infirmity, or mental incapacitation; serious illness; physical disability, including blindness and limited mobility; and any other factual circumstances that indicate a severe or hazardous health situation.

The utility may require written verification of the especial danger to health by a physician or a public health official, including the name of the person endangered; a statement that the person is a resident of the premises in question; the name, business address, and telephone number of the certifying party; the nature of the health danger; and approximately how long the danger will continue. Initial verification by the verifying party may be by telephone if written verification is forwarded to the utility within five days.

Verification shall postpone disconnection for 30 days. In the event service is terminated within 14 days prior to verification of illness by or for a qualifying resident, service shall be restored to that residence if a proper verification is thereafter made in accordance with the foregoing provisions. If the customer does not enter into a reasonable payment agreement for the retirement of the unpaid balance of the account within the first 30 days and does not keep the current account paid during the period that the unpaid balance is to be retired, the customer is subject to disconnection pursuant to paragraph 19.4(14)*"f."*

(9) Winter energy assistance. If between November 1 through April 1 the utility is informed that the customer's household may qualify for winter energy assistance or weatherization funds, there shall be no disconnection of service for 30 days from the date the utility is notified to allow the customer time to obtain assistance. Disconnection shall not take place from November 1 through April 1 for a resident who is a head of household and who has been certified to the utility by the community action agency as eligible for either the low-income home energy assistance program or weatherization assistance program. A utility may develop an incentive program to delay disconnection on April 1 for customers who make payments throughout the November 1 through April 1 period. All such incentive programs shall be set forth in tariffs approved by the commission.

(10) Deployment. If the utility is informed that one of the heads of household, as defined in Iowa Code section 476.20, is a service member deployed for military service, as defined in Iowa Code section 29A.90, disconnection cannot take place at the residence during the deployment or prior to 90 days after the end of the deployment.

e. Abnormal gas consumption. A customer who is subject to disconnection for nonpayment of bill, and who has gas consumption that appears to the customer to be abnormally high, may request the utility to provide assistance in identifying the factors contributing to this usage pattern and to suggest remedial measures. The utility shall provide assistance by discussing patterns of gas usage that may be readily identifiable, suggesting that an energy audit be conducted, and identifying sources of energy conservation information and financial assistance that may be available to the customer.

f. A utility may disconnect gas service after 24-hour notice (and without the written 12-day notice) for failure of the customer to comply with the terms of a payment agreement.

g. Prior to November 1, utilities will mail customers a notice describing the availability of winter energy assistance funds and the application process. The notice must be of a type size that is easily legible and conspicuous and contain the information set out by the state agency administering the assistance program.

19.4(15) *Insufficient reasons for denying service.* The following do not constitute sufficient cause for refusal of service to a customer:

a. Delinquency in payment for service by a previous occupant of the premises to be served.

b. Failure to pay for merchandise purchased from the utility.

c. Failure to pay for a different type or class of utility service.

d. Failure to pay the bill of another customer as guarantor thereof.

e. Failure to pay the back bill provided in accordance with paragraph 19.4(13)*"b"* (slow meters).

f. Failure to pay adjusted bills based on the undercharges set forth in paragraph 19.4(13)*"e."*

g. Failure of a residential customer to pay a deposit during the period November 1 through April 1 for the location at which the customer has been receiving service in the customer's name.

h. Delinquency in payment for service by an occupant, if the customer applying for service is creditworthy and able to satisfy any deposit requirements.

i. Delinquency in payment for service arising more than ten years prior, as measured from the most recent of:

(1) The last date of service for the account giving rise to the delinquency,

(2) Physical disconnection of service for the account giving rise to the delinquency, or

(3) The last voluntary payment or voluntary written promise of payment made by the customer, if made before the ten-year period described in this paragraph has otherwise lapsed.

19.4(16) *When disconnection prohibited.*

a. No disconnection may take place from November 1 through April 1 for a resident who is a head of household and who has been certified to the utility by the local community action agency as being eligible for either the low-income home energy assistance program or weatherization assistance program.

b. If the utility is informed that one of the heads of household as defined in Iowa Code section 476.20 is a service member deployed for military service, as defined in Iowa Code section 29A.90, disconnection cannot take place at the residence during the deployment or prior to 90 days after the end of the deployment.

19.4(17) *Change in character of service.* The following shall apply to a material change in the character of gas service:

a. Changes under the control of the utility. The utility shall make such changes only with the approval of the commission and after adequate notice to the customers (paragraph 19.7(6)*"a"*).

b. Changes not under control of the utility or customer. Utilities will adjust appliances to attain the proper combustion of the gas supplied. Due consideration shall be given to the gas heating value and specific gravity (paragraph 19.7(6)*"b"*).

c. Appliance adjustment charge. Utilities will make any necessary adjustments to the customer's appliances without charge and shall conduct the adjustment program with a minimum of inconvenience to the customers.

19.4(18) *Customer complaints.* Utilities will investigate promptly and thoroughly and keep a record of written complaints and all other reasonable complaints received by it from its customers in regard to safety, service, or rates, and the operation of its system that will enable it to review and analyze its procedures and actions. The record shall show the name and address of the complainant, the date and nature of the complaint, and its disposition and the date thereof. All complaints caused by a major outage or interruption shall be summarized in a single report.

a. Tariffs will include a concise, fully informative procedure for the resolution of customer complaints.

b. Reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that customers unable to travel are not denied the right to be heard.

c. The final step in a complaint hearing and review procedure shall be a filing for commission resolution of the issues.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code sections 476.2, 476.6, 476.8, 476.20 and 476.54.

[**ARC 0741D**, IAB 11/11/26, effective 12/16/26]